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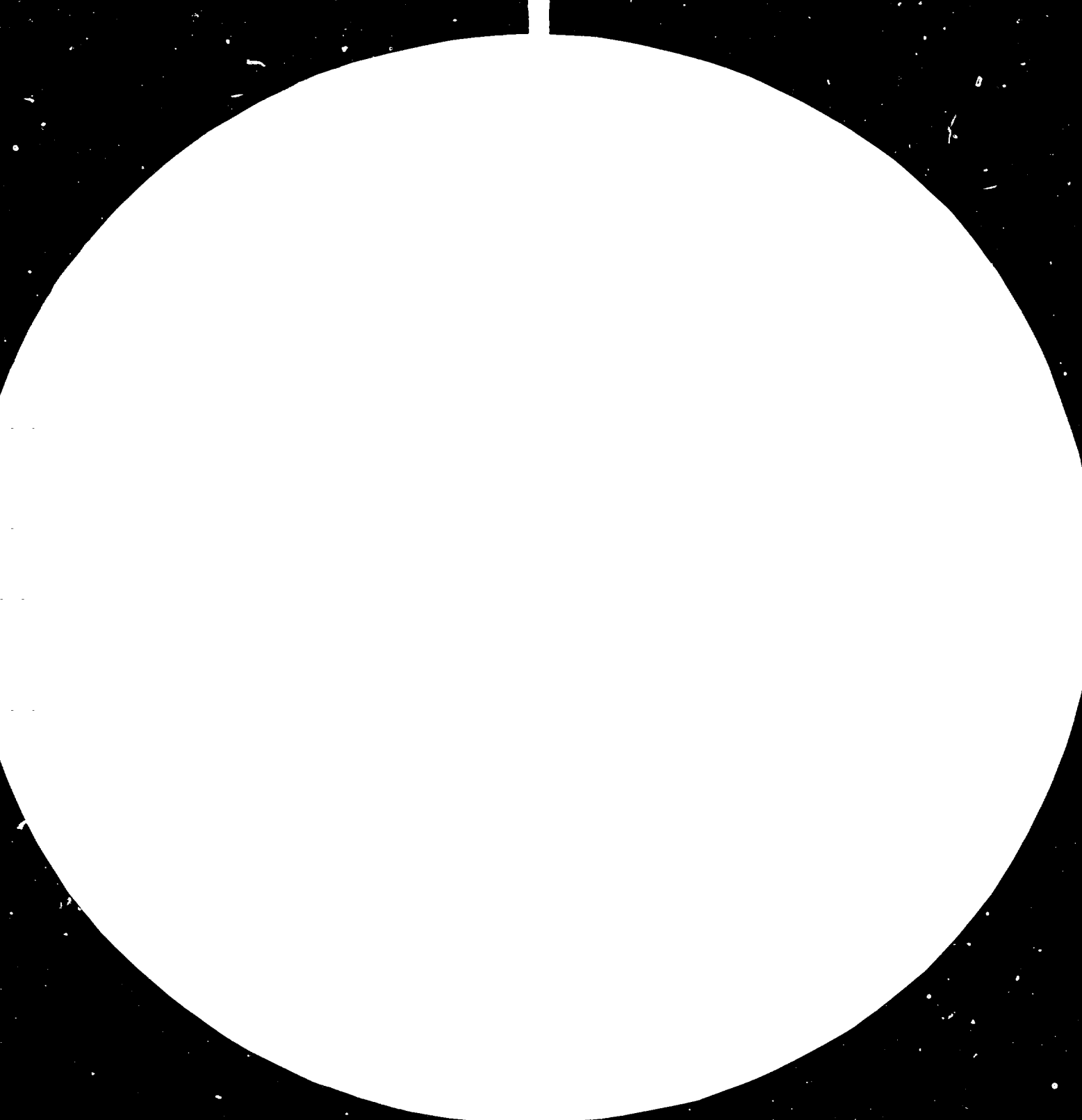
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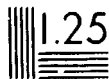
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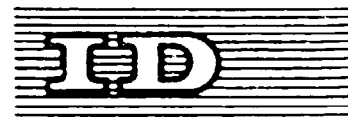
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Second meeting of the Ad hoc UNCTAD/UNIDO
Group of Experts on Trade and Trade-related
Aspects of Industrial Collaboration
Arrangements

Vienna, Austria, 1 - 12 June 1981

FLows AND CHANNELS OF INFORMATION
ON TRADE AND TRADE-RELATED ASPECTS OF
INDUSTRIAL COLLABORATION ARRANGEMENTS*

Prepared by

The Secretariat of the
United Nations Conference
on Trade and Development

991

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>
Summary and conclusions	(i) - (vii)
Introduction	1 - 2
I Need for information on trade and industrial collaboration	3 - 4
II Activities and information relating to trade and industrial co-operation	5 - 24
A. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)	6 - 13
B. United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)	14 - 18
C. United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC)	19 - 22
D. Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)	23 - 24
E. European Economic Community (EEC)	25
III Flows and channels of information on trade and industrial collaboration	26 - 31
A. Information available within United Nations bodies	26 - 30
B. Information not available within United Nations bodies	31
IV The role of information in promoting and facilitating trade and industrial collaboration	32 - 36
V A multilateral system of information on trade and industrial collaboration arrangements	37 - 41

Summary and conclusions

- (i) International arrangements for trade and industrial co-operation have been growing steadily in number and scope, particularly at the enterprise level and new types of collaboration agreements are continually evolving. Many governments and enterprises, particularly in developing countries, are not sufficiently informed of many aspects of existing arrangements and, perhaps more importantly, of the full range of opportunities and advantages inherent in, and experience of, such collaboration.
- (ii) The availability of detailed, precise, and up-to-date information regarding various aspects of trade and industrial collaboration arrangements, including the framework within which they are implemented or operated as well as their modalities, would be very helpful in promoting and facilitating trade and industrial collaboration in its various forms.
- (iii) A preliminary survey of information relating to trade and industrial collaboration arrangements available within the United Nations system, in particular in UNCTAD, UNIDO, the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC) and ECE, would seem to indicate the existence of a considerable stock of substantive information and material on many aspects of collaboration arrangements emanating over the years from the relevant activities of these organizations.
- (iv) The collection, processing, organization and dissemination of information relating to trade and industrial co-operation is undertaken by United Nations bodies in various ways and their degree of comprehensiveness as well as sources vary among the different organizations depending upon the nature of the latter's functions and the availability of resources.
- (v) Information and other material in the United Nations organizations are provided in the form of studies, reports, registers, laws and regulations, contracts and agreements, directories, etc., and are available to governments, other international organizations, national bodies, private users, etc., on an automatic or a request basis, depending upon the type of circulation given to the document. Documents for general distribution are widely available, while those with limited or restricted distribution are available to certain users only.

- (vi) Many types of relevant information are not available in United Nations bodies. In view of their importance there is a need to establish and develop flows and channels for this information, which would be very useful to governments and private parties exploring or developing trade and industrial collaboration arrangements. There is no comprehensive information system at present with full capability to collect, process, organize and disseminate the types of information and material available in the United Nations system and in other sources useful to the decision-making processes at both the governmental and the private enterprise levels.
- (vii) The setting-up of a comprehensive information system would require considerable resources and thus appears to be beyond the means of a single organization in the United Nations system at present. Initially, therefore, a clearing or referral mechanism on trade and industrial collaboration information might be considered on an experimental and co-operative basis among the international organizations concerned. The system could be developed gradually in the light of its operation and the requirements of both governments and other potential users, particularly private enterprises.

Introduction

1. The ad hoc UNCTAD/UNIDO Group of Experts on Trade and Trade-related Aspects of Industrial Collaboration Arrangements, at its first session from 22 to 26 October 1979, agreed that industrial co-operation and trade between developed and developing countries needs to be further encouraged and strengthened to facilitate the industrialization and healthy economic development of developing countries and to improve the prospects of international economic relations. The Group recommended that, in order to assist and facilitate further consideration of the related issues, the secretariats of UNCTAD and UNIDO jointly undertake a programme of work consisting of, inter alia, an examination of ways and means of improving existing flows and channels of information pertaining to the trade and trade-related aspects of industrial collaboration arrangements.^{1/} Accordingly, this matter has been included in the provisional agenda of the Group of Experts at its second session.

2. The present note is intended to facilitate the deliberations of the Group of Experts on this subject. It briefly surveys the relevant information activities of UNCTAD and UNIDO as well as other bodies within the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC) and ECE, and focuses on a number of areas where the improvement of existing flows and channels of information concerning various aspects of trade and industrial collaboration arrangements would appear desirable. The note also presents some suggestions on the action that might be taken in this regard.

^{1/} See the report of the Ad hoc UNCTAD/UNIDO Group of Experts on Trade and Trade-related Aspects of Industrial Collaboration Arrangements (TD/B/774), para. 34(g). Circulated in UNIDO as ID/B/234.

I. Need for information on trade and industrial collaboration

3. Governments, particularly of developing countries, are making vigorous efforts to develop and promote the industrial sector and to expand their exports of manufactures in pursuance of the strategy for accelerating economic growth. In many developing countries these activities are undertaken by both public and private enterprises, either independently or in some cases in collaboration with similar enterprises in other countries, including those in developed countries. In some instances, trade and industrial collaboration arrangements are concluded or operated within the framework of intergovernmental agreements or arrangements but in many others solely through contracts between the enterprises concerned. Such collaboration ranges from simple activities such as a straightforward contract to manufacture and sub-contracting to more complex arrangements such as joint ventures, joint projects or undertakings, supply or leasing of plants, co-production and specialization arrangements, etc.

4. During the last few years arrangements for trade and industrial co-operation have been growing steadily in number and scope, particularly at the enterprise level, and new types of collaboration arrangements or agreements are continually evolving. However, because of the fairly rapid growth of such co-operation many governments and enterprises, particularly in the developing countries, are not sufficiently informed of many aspects of existing arrangements and perhaps more importantly of the full range of opportunities and advantages inherent in trade and industrial collaboration. Thus, a widening of the availability of detailed, precise and up-to-date information regarding aspects of trade and industrial collaboration including the framework within which they are implemented or operated as well as the modalities of such arrangements, would be very helpful in promoting and facilitating trade and industrial collaboration in its various forms.

II. Activities and information relating to trade and industrial co-operation

5. A preliminary survey of information relating to trade and trade-related aspects of industrial collaboration arrangements in a number of agencies and organizations within the United Nations system, in particular UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNCTC, and ECE, would seem to indicate the existence of a large stock of information and material on many aspects of collaboration arrangements emanating over the years from the various activities of these organizations in the field of economic co-operation.^{2/} The following sections give a brief description of the substantive nature, scope and coverage of existing information flows and channels in relation to such material.

A. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

6. In pursuance of decisions by the Conference and its permanent machinery, i.e. the Trade and Development Board and its subsidiary bodies, the UNCTAD secretariat is engaged in a wide range of continuing activities covering both technical and policy issues that are directly or indirectly relevant to the trade and trade-related aspects of industrial collaboration.

7. For instance, the UNCTAD Manufactures Division undertakes studies concerning action to strengthen the production of and trade in manufactures of developing countries, including the elaboration of specific measures pertaining, inter alia, to, (a) the identification of industrial activities that could be the subject of industrial collaboration arrangements, as well as ways of promoting such arrangements in their various forms; (b) commercial co-operation between developing and developed countries and among developing countries, aimed at facilitating the operation of collaboration arrangements; (c) promotion of trade and industrial co-operation between the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and developing countries, and development and expansion of medium-term and long-term co-operation programmes in, for instance, trade, industry, science and technology; (d) wider use of compensatory agreements aimed at developing the export sectors in developing countries.

^{2/} Relevant information and material also flow from some of the activities of other international bodies, e.g. the ILO, OECD, WIPO, World Bank, e c.

8. Also relevant are the activities of the Division pertaining to restrictive business practices, market structures and marketing and distribution, the objectives of which are, through action at the national, regional and international levels, to eliminate or effectively deal with restrictive business practices including those of transnational corporations, that adversely affect international trade, particularly that of developing countries; and to improve market structures and systems of marketing and distribution so as to strengthen the participation of developing countries in international trade. The work programme includes the devising of ways and means of improving the supply and exchange of information in respect of restrictive business practices adversely affecting the trade and development of developing countries; collection and dissemination of information on restrictive business practices in general by the UNCTAD secretariat and in close co-operation with the UNCTC; and the elaboration of a model law or laws on restrictive business practices in order to assist developing countries in drafting appropriate legislation. Following the adoption of the set of principles and rules for the control of restrictive business practices (TD/RBP/CONF/10), action in UNCTAD concerning the principles and rules calls for continuing efforts to establish or improve multilateral procedures for the supply and exchange of information. Annual reports will continue to be made on developments in legislation in the area of restrictive business practices and the implementation of the principles and rules. Further studies will be made on the experience acquired, especially in developing countries, in the implementation of restrictive business practice legislation and the problems arising in this context.

9. Furthermore, the Division for Trade with Socialist Countries undertakes continuing activities relating to the expansion of trade among countries having different economic and social systems, in particular between developing countries and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. The aim of these activities is to expand trade among the countries concerned on a stable and long-term basis through the promotion of interrelated policies within a comprehensive approach covering various forms of trade and economic co-operation. The Division carries out studies on measures for the promotion of sustained expansion of trade through medium-term and long-term agreements, including intergovernmental agreements on trade-creating

industrial specialization and co-operation. Studies are also undertaken in regard to new forms of co-operation such as multilateral trade and payments arrangements, including tripartite industrial co-operation and co-operation between the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) and developing countries, and in particular possibilities of co-operation in the multilateral schemes of CMEA member countries.

10. Apart from its activities relating to an international code of conduct on the transfer of technology and the revision of the Paris Convention on Industrial Property, the Technology Division is engaged in continuing work on, inter alia, the formulation of national laws, regulations and policies on the transfer and development of technology; industrial property systems, at both the international and national levels, with regard to the economic, commercial and developmental aspects of the systems; and the formulation and implementation of technology policies designed to contribute in an integrated way to the achievement of the economic, social and environmental objectives of developing countries.
11. The relevant activities of the Division for Economic Co-operation among Developing Countries include substantive work relating to the strengthening of economic co-operation among developing countries through, inter alia, trade preferences, greater participation in the processing, distribution and marketing of exports, greater co-operation in the commercial, technological and financial fields, promotion of co-operation among State trading organizations and joint import procurement policies. The Division is also in the process of setting up a trade information system with three main components: (a) an information system on barriers to trade among developing countries; (b) promotion of interregional trade opportunities between selected developing countries through supply-demand studies; and (c) computerized import demand information for the expansion of trade among developing countries.
12. The UNCTAD secretariat collaborates closely with the UNIDO secretariat on many aspects of these activities within its competence.

13. The International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT (ITC) which serves as a focal point for technical assistance and co-operation activities in the export promotion field within the United Nations system of technical co-operation, is engaged in a wide range of activities which give rise to various types of information in the form of studies, reports, etc. that are substantially relevant to industrial and trade co-operation. ITC also has a trade information service with the following objectives: (a) to systematize the flow of information to and from developing countries on trade and marketing conditions affecting products and markets of export interest to them; (b) to establish and strengthen trade information services within trade promotion institutions in developing countries, including the building-up of well-conceived and well-equipped trade documentation centres; (c) to establish and strengthen commercial representation information networks in foreign target markets to ensure the continuing collection of up-to-date trade and marketing information; (d) to train government trade promotion officials and export executives in the methods and systems of collection, processing and dissemination of trade and marketing information.

B. United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

14. The UNIDO secretariat, in accordance with its mandate to promote and accelerate industrialization in developing countries with a view to enabling developing countries to increase their share of world manufacturing production, undertakes a wide range of activities relating to industrial collaboration. These activities include continuing research, the preparation of studies, dissemination of technological and marketing information, organization of training courses in technological and management skills, investment promotion, consultations on specific industrial sectors, and various aspects of industrial development within the framework of the System of Consultation.

15. Information on industrial collaboration is a significant component of UNIDO's industrial and technological information activities. The Industrial and Technological Information Bank (INTIB) provides information

on technology selection in 20 selected sectors of industry ^{3/}. The Industrial Inquiry Service provides information to inquiries from developing countries which include aspects of industrial collaboration. The monthly UNIDO Newsletter provides information for promotion of industrial collaboration through publishing requests from enterprises in developing and developed countries under the heading "Resources sought" and "Resources available" in its "Industrial Opportunities" column. The Technological Information Exchange System (TIES) provides a forum for technology transfer registries in developing countries to exchange information on reciprocal basis on technology transfer contracts. The system contains computerized information on about 4.000 contracts which is made available to participant registries on a reciprocal basis. A TIES newsletter is also published bi-monthly which provides information inter alia on developments and regulations concerning industrial collaborations. The UNIDO secretariat has also initiated co-operative arrangements with the Licensing Executive Society (LES) which provide yet another source of information on industrial collaboration.

16. UNIDO's Investment Co-operative Programme generates and disseminates information on industrial collaboration through its investment promotion meetings and its investment promotion services, with offices as of 1980 in 7 industrialized countries. In addition it employs several promotional tools. One of them is a list of screened investment project proposals classifying projects according to the ISIC and showing them in country sequence. Project information includes a brief description, proposed location and markets, estimated cost and foreign contribution desired. The list is distributed to potential partners in industrialized countries.

^{3/} See "The Industrial and Technological Information Bank helps developing countries to select technology" (PI/61) and "Industrial and Technological Information Bank: activities undertaken in 1980 and prospects for the future" (ID/B 259). The 20 sectors of INTIB operation are: Iron and steel; Fertilizers; Agricultural machinery and implements; Agro-industries; Non-conventional sources of energy; Petrochemicals; Vegetable oils and fats; Leather and leather industry; Pharmaceuticals; Capital goods; Food processing; Low-cost transport for rural areas; Paper products and small pulp mills; Energy for rural requirements; Textiles; Food storage; Sugar; Light industries and rural workshops; Construction and building materials; Electronics.

The second tool consists of industrial investment profiles on developing countries (50 covered as of 1980) with information on investment conditions in them. The third tool is a directory of financial resources for industrial projects in developing countries. The fourth tool is a roster of resources offered by 1.250 enterprises in nearly 40 industrial and advanced developing countries for industrial investment projects in developing countries. Updated twice yearly, the roster lists projects classified according to ISIC for which joint ventures, cash investment, technology, licenses, management expertise or similar resources are available. It is distributed to over 600 institutions in developing countries including ministries of industry and investment banks. ^{4/}

17. The System of Consultations provides an important forum for negotiation for industrial co-operation between developed and developing countries. A feature emerging from Consultations on several industrial sectors was the emphasis placed on contractual arrangements for industrial collaboration. Model contracts for fertilizer plant construction, which were discussed at the second and third Consultations on the fertilizer industry, have begun to be used by developing countries in their negotiations. Contractual arrangements are also being examined by the Consultations on the petrochemical and pharmaceutical industries, to review the licensing of patents and know-how, and by the Consultations on capital goods and agricultural machinery, ^{5/} to consider long-term arrangements for the transfer of technology.
18. UNIDO's Technology Programme has also initiated studies on the patterns of technology exports from developing countries including the forms of industrial collaboration adopted.

C. United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC)

19. Since its establishment in 1974, the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC) has developed a comprehensive information system which deals with the operations of transnational corporations (TNCs) and has amassed considerable data on individual transnational enterprises.

^{4/} Annual Report of the Executive Director 1980. IL/B/260, page 77

^{5/} Ibid, page 95.

The system is being developed and extended as a continuing activity in that more information is being collected, indexed and stored and at present a considerable amount of information is now available in the UNCTC. The system is primarily oriented to the needs of governments and government agencies. The principal components of the UNCTC's information system on transnational corporations include information on policies, laws and regulations relating to TNCs, on trends in investment and technology, and on certain corporate practices, studies on the role and activities of TNCs in particular sectors or industrial branches, information on individual TNCs, including general corporate data and corporate profiles of principal corporations in selected sectors and fields of activity, and information on contracts and agreements and on data and information sources. ^{6/}

20. The information collected from each of these components is stored for rapid retrieval. Certain elements of information, such as laws and regulations, studies on TNCs' activities in particular sectors, and trends in the activities of such corporations are incorporated into the Centre's publications. Part of the information is analyzed, indexed, stored and retrieved manually by using standard file cross-reference cards. A considerable portion of the information, which includes information on individual corporations and parent-affiliate relationships, is stored and retrieved by computer.

21. The Centre uses a wide variety of sources to provide data for its information system, e.g. governments and governmental agencies, transnational corporations, specialized non-governmental organizations, trade unions, industrial associations, commercial reference sources, etc. UNCTAD, UNIDO and the other United Nations organizations, regional commissions, governments' and governmental agencies and business newspapers and magazines are other important sources of information and data. The material collected and analyzed by the Centre is utilized in the preparation of certain publications. ^{7/}

^{6/} The information available from the system also supplements material available from other United Nations and international agencies dealing with similar or related issues. With UNCTC, the system provides information support for its advisory services and policy analysis. For a detailed description of the information system on transnational corporations, see Users Guide to the Information System on Transnational Corporations: a Technical Paper (ST/CTC/13); United Nations publication, Sales No. E.80.II.A.6.

^{7/} See for example, National legislation and regulations relating to transnational corporations (ST/CTC/6), United Nations publication, Sales No. E.78.II.A.3; Bibliography on transnational corporations (ST/CTC/4), United Nations publication, Sales No. E/F.78.II.A.4; List of company directories and summary of their contents (ST/CTC/2 and Corr.1), United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.II.A.8.

22. Apart from the Users Guide, the Centre has established a system for answering requests from governments and intergovernmental organizations which enable it to respond to and monitor the needs of users. It organizes from time to time a Round Table on information requirements with respect to transnational corporations.

D. Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

23. For many years past, the ECE secretariat has been engaged in various activities to foster industrial and technological co-operation among ECE countries at the governmental and enterprise level, particularly countries with different economic and social systems. These activities relate, inter alia, to research-intensive branches of manufacturing, specialization, and co-production arrangements, joint tendering, joint projects, licensing, etc. The ECE secretariat has undertaken a series of investigations concerning many western and eastern enterprises involved in industrial co-operation. Its programme of work in the field of industrial co-operation includes activities relating to analysis of short-term and long-term trends and prospects for industrial co-operation, measures designed to create favourable conditions for industrial co-operation, improvement in the provision of information to those concerned on general conditions for the promotion of trade through industrial co-operation, and guidance on the preparation of contracts in the field.

24. The ECE secretariat's work also includes monitoring and analyzing the development of industrial co-operation, including new forms of such co-operation, and making more widely known the advantages which such arrangements offer to partners as well as the contribution they make to an improved pattern of specialization in world production and trade. In addition, the secretariat is engaged in the collection and dissemination of information relevant to the promotion of trade through industrial co-operation, in particular laws and regulations, including those relating to foreign exchange, general orientation of national economic plans and programmes as well as programme priorities and economic conditions of the market. It maintains a register of intergovernmental agreements and has prepared a Guide for drawing up international contracts in industrial co-operation.^{8/}

^{8/} The ECE secretariat document entitled "The development of East-West industrial co-operation" (ID/WG.337/1), also before the Group of Experts, describes in greater detail the information activities of the ECE pertaining to industrial co-operation.

E. European Economic Community (EEC)

25. In order to promote co-operation among firms in EEC member States, the Commission of the European Communities set up in 1973 a Business Co-operation Centre (BCC) designed to engender cross-border co-operation and integration between small- and medium-sized firms in member countries. The functions of the BCC are twofold, namely, to provide information on various aspects of co-operation and partners, and to conduct searches for partners by putting interested firms in touch with each other, assisting during negotiations and advising on the drafting of contracts.

III Flows and channels of information on trade and industrial collaboration

A. Information available within United Nations bodies

26. There exists at present in the organizations within the United Nations system directly involved in activities relating to the promotion of trade and industrial co-operation, a mass of information and material in the form of studies, reports, registers and various other types of documents. The dissemination of this material by the United Nations organizations concerned is based on established distribution lists for the different types of documentation. United Nations documentation is classified according to the type of distribution given to it - general, limited, restricted, miscellaneous, etc. Documents for general distribution are sent to member States, the United Nations specialized agencies, depositories of United Nations documentation or libraries having a special status with the United Nations (e.g. parliamentary libraries), United Nations information centres, and intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations which have status with the United Nations, etc. Mimeographed documentation for general distribution is available on a subscription basis. Documentation sent to governments is transmitted through channels or government agencies designated by governments for the purpose. Limited or restricted documentation, as well as miscellaneous documents are available to member States, and to participants in the meetings of the relevant bodies. Restricted documentation is not available to the general public.^{2/}
27. Some of the documents for general distribution are printed as United Nations sales publications, and are made available on request free of charge to interested parties. Single copies of other documents given a general or limited distribution are available on request.

^{2/} For fuller information, see United Nations Documentation: A brief guide (ST/UIB/34/Rev.1) January 1981, New York.

28. Periodically, lists of documentation are published by these organizations. UNCTAD regularly publishes a "Guide to UNCTAD Publications" containing the titles of a selection of reports and studies issued by the UNCTAD secretariat during the year. UNIDO publishes every two weeks a "Checklist of UNIDO Documents" distributed in the previous two weeks and each year issues a cumulative list for the period beginning 1 January 1967^{10/}. UNIDO also has an Industrial Inquiry Service which handles inquiries and maintains industrial development abstracts containing information on UNIDO and other documentation. These abstracts are published in several volumes and are also stored in a computerised data base (INDIS). Other information accessed by UNIDO is also maintained in a separate data base (LINK). The regional commissions (ECE, ECLA, ESCAP, ECA and ECWA) also publish periodically a list of their respective publications.

29. A wide variety of documentation or publications by public or private international and national research bodies, such as journals, bulletins, registers, periodicals, books, studies, reports, etc., containing from time to time material related to trade and industrial co-operation, are also available in UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNCTC and the United Nations regional commissions, where they are normally kept in the libraries or reference units of these bodies. The Geneva library of the United Nations publishes a "Weekly bibliography" of newly acquired books, official documents and periodicals in catalogue form, which are available for consultation or loan to officials of ECE and UNCTAD among others. The titles of the material are grouped by broad subjects with call numbers for easy reference. The libraries of the other international organizations, including UNIDO and UNCTC, also provide reference facilities for documentation.

30. The library facilities of United Nations organizations are available to the staff of the secretariats as well as to member States and the public. However, library material is available mainly on a reference basis or for use in the library, although in some instances it is also provided on a short-term loan basis.^{11/}

^{10/} The latest issue is entitled "Documents list. Cumulative list for the period 1 January 1967 to 31 December 1979" (ID/SER.C/208).

^{11/} For fuller information see United Nations library, Geneva, Directory of Libraries and Documentation Centres in the United Nations System, Series E: Guides and Studies, No.1, United Nations publications, Sales No. E.79.I.9.

B. Information not available in United Nations bodies

31. The earlier section dealt with information and material from primary and secondary sources related to trade and industrial collaboration, which are available in the international organizations concerned. There are also several types of relevant information which cannot be obtained in these organizations. Moreover, information and material mainly from private sources such as private enterprises or firms is unlikely to be available to potential users without a systematic effort to obtain it since it can be obtained only through direct or indirect contacts such as questionnaires, reporting by the parties concerned, field trips, correspondence, etc.^{12/} In view of its importance, there is a need to establish and develop flows and channels for information of this kind which can be very useful to governments and private enterprises or individuals wishing to explore or develop trade and industrial collaboration.

^{12/} Various types of corporate data, e.g. company reports, contracts and agreements, financial data and other types of information on individual corporations, are supplied to UNCTC by private firms on a confidential basis strictly for its own use.

IV The role of information in promoting and facilitating trade and industrial collaboration

32. As mentioned before, the development and facilitation of trade and industrial co-operation at governmental and enterprise levels call for considerable knowledge not only of the opportunities in this field but also of the specific practices, measures or modalities relating to many aspects of existing agreements or arrangements.
33. In drawing up and negotiating intergovernmental agreements, Governments require substantial detailed information to assist them in defining the principles that should govern the relationship among the parties to such agreements as well as the types of policies and legal and administrative measures that would promote the agreements.^{13/} Governments also need information regarding the sectors, industries or branches of industrial production that might be suitable for trade-oriented industrial collaboration arrangements. The task of making such arrangements would be greatly facilitated if the governmental agencies or bodies concerned were to have adequate information at their disposal, particularly based on actual experience in this field.
34. Private enterprises or individuals interested in trade and industrial collaboration would need similar information when exploring or developing such arrangements with counterparts in other countries. The information and material obtainable from the United Nations system and other sources would be of great assistance to them in this regard. There is need for a comprehensive information system capable of collecting, organizing and disseminating the types of information and material useful to the decision-making process at both governmental and private enterprise levels.

^{13/} See Industrial collaboration arrangements, Report by the secretariat of UNCTAD (TD/B/C.2/179), United Nations publication, Sales No.E.78.II.D.3.

35. While governments may have easy access to, or may be already knowledgeable about the type of documentation and material available, this is often not so in the case of private enterprises or firms in need of similar information on trade and industrial co-operation.

36. UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNCTC, the regional commissions, and other bodies within the United Nations system that have a vested interest in promoting trade and industrial co-operation should have greater capabilities than they now possess to disseminate information in this field effectively and systematically both to governments and to private enterprises and firms.

V. A multilateral system of information on trade and industrial collaboration arrangements

37. The increasing availability of information on various aspects of trade and industrial collaboration within the United Nations as well as in other international and national sources provides an important infrastructure for promoting and facilitating trade and industrial collaboration arrangements in their various forms. However, it is necessary for this information to be readily available to governments and private parties and other potential users. As far as possible such information should be coupled with other promotional activities for trade and industrial collaboration and should incorporate the specific requirements of individual industry sectors. At present there is no one organization or body within the United Nations serving as a clearing centre or referral mechanism for such information. Any centre or clearing mechanism would require not only close co-operation and co-ordination among the relevant organizations within the system but also between the centre or mechanism and other national or international bodies as well as private enterprises or firms. In consequence, it would appear highly desirable to develop and establish appropriate arrangements among the organizations and parties concerned so that the needed information may be transmitted to, and disseminated from, the centre or clearing mechanism in the most economical and expeditious manner.

38. As a start to the development of such a mechanism, some sort of an international referral system might be set up in one of the United Nations organizations dealing with trade and industrial collaboration. Under such a system, a register might initially be drawn up of the relevant information and material as it became available. It could be classified in the register according to subject, country, industry or branch of industry, sources, date, status (published, unpublished), confidentiality, category of material - laws, regulations, contracts or agreements, sectoral studies, company reports, etc. - and the name of the organizations in which the material could be found. In this connexion, the selection and organization of data and information should be governed by criteria based on the requirements of the potential users. To facilitate the storage and retrieval of information the clearing or referral mechanism could be computer-based.

39. The information activities needed in the field of trade and industrial collaboration would appear to go beyond activities presently undertaken by UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNCTC, or ECE. The proposal to create an ECE Information Centre on Industrial Co-operation within the ECE has been pending for some years now. At this time, among the United Nations bodies, it is UNCTC that would seem to have the most comprehensive information system pertaining to transnational corporations.

40. Ideally a more effective approach to the promotion of trade and industrial collaboration arrangements, particularly at enterprise level would seem to be the establishment of an international centre entrusted with a number of functions, including (i) systematic collection and dissemination of relevant information (general and specific) for use both by governments and by private enterprises; (ii) periodic presentation, on the basis of information provided by member States or enterprises, of possible areas of co-operation (bilateral, tripartite, multilateral); (iii) systematic identification and exploration of industrial sectors or projects lending themselves to multilateral projects; (iv) provision of advisory services to governments or enterprises on matters relating to trade and industrial collaboration arrangements; (v) maintenance of close links with relevant ministries or agencies in member States and with national and regional institutions concerned with trade and industrial collaboration. However, such a centre would require substantial resources to operate and maintain.^{14/}

^{14/} The importance of a centre of the type was recognized in the Lomé Convention and resulted in the establishment of the Industrial Development Centre in 1976, to facilitate trade and industrial co-operation between firms in the EEC and ACP states and to assist small- and medium-sized enterprises to find suitable partners. A proposal to set up such a body was also made in the ECE Committee on the Development of Trade at its twenty-seventh session (November/December 1978) (ECE/TRADE/130 and Corr.1) para.61.

41. A more practical approach might be to set up a referral or clearing mechanism on trade and industrial collaboration information on an experimental and co-operative basis among the international organizations concerned. The mechanism could be established in the organization that has a fairly well-advanced information system and where considerable relevant information or material is already available. The operation of the system could be monitored, directed and periodically reviewed by an inter-agency group composed of representatives of the organizations concerned. The group would help to develop the operation of the system and to work out ways and means of improving it.



